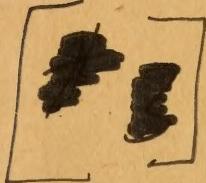


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State Horticultural Society

BULLETIN NO. 3

Published by authority of the Executive Committee

Cranefield, H.
" Spring Flowering Bulbs

MADISON, WIS., OCTOBER, 1904:

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free to members of the Society

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Spring Flowering Bulbs

F. CRANEFIELD.

The spring-flowering bulbs are a joy and a blessing. Flower beds and borders that would otherwise be bare and unsightly in the spring may, if filled with tulips, be a blaze of color for weeks. These with crocus, narcissus and others of the Holland bulbs, will give an abundance of bloom before the annuals and the summer flowering plants may be safely planted. In order to have this it is necessary to plant in the fall. October is the month of preparation for this brilliant spring show. But the planting may be done any time before the ground freezes.

Crocus, tulips and similar bulbs are grown in Holland and are sent to us in late summer or early autumn and may then be had from florists or seedsmen dry and dormant. The bulbs have in their thickened leaves a storehouse of food surrounding the perfectly formed embryo blossoms. We need only to plant them in rich well drained soil any time before the ground is frozen and cover with a mulch of heavy leaves. However, in order to meet with full success we must observe certain practical considerations.

Preparation of Soil

The beds where summer flowers have been growing should now be cleared of rubbish, the soil deeply spaded and well pulverized. Deep tillage is essential, as the roots of bulbous plants strike straight downward, branching but little.

Drainage

The soil must be light in texture and well-drained, as the bulbs will decay if water settles about them. If the soil is a heavy clay it will be well to raise the beds a few inches to insure perfect drainage.

Manure

It is not essential that the soil should be very rich. It is more important that it be light and porous. Use only thoroughly decayed manure. Fresh manure will cause the bulbs to decay.

Planting

Tulips, etc., are usually planted in "designs" or masses of contrasting colors. As the bulbs of the different varieties are all much alike in appearance great care is necessary in handling to avoid mixing.

After the beds are prepared for planting and the design outlined the bulbs may all be set on the surface of the bed, placing all of one kind before commencing with another.

Make the holes for planting with the fingers. Cover lightly and after planting compact firmly the whole surface of the bed by walking over it. Do not push the bulbs into the soil without first making holes, for this leaves them on a bed of hard soil and the straight downward growing roots will tend to push the bulbs to the surface.

Winter Protection

The bulbs here recommended for planting are all hardy in the sense of power to withstand cold, but all require a winter mulch to prevent alternate freezing and thawing. This is best put on after the ground is frozen and may consist of 3 to 6 inches of leaves or strawy manure. Field mice are very fond of bulbs and are apt to harbor in the mulching if it is put on before heavy frosts.

Spring Treatment

Uncover early in the spring as soon as their first leaf buds appear. Do not fear late spring frosts, as tulips, etc., suffer but little or not at all from freezing if the growth is made in the open. There is greater danger of injury by frost to the spindling growth resulting from delayed removal of the mulch.

Summer Treatment

After flowering the tops turn yellow and die and the bulbs may be allowed to remain in the ground for a second and even a third year. Annuals and bedding plants may be planted without disturbing the bulbs. In case it is desired to remove them immediately after flowering dig carefully and "heel-in" or transplant closely in rows in the garden and leave until the tops die; then lift the bulbs, dry a day or two in the sun and store in a dry place until fall.

Kinds to Plant

TULIPS

There are several classes (trade lists) of tulips, but the single early sorts are most satisfactory for outdoor culture. The following kinds are of like period of flowering and of the same height, two important features in large beds:

Red—Crimson King, Artus, Belle Alliance.

Yellow—Chrysola, Yellow Prince.

White—Pottebakker, Cottage Maid, La Reine.

Variegated—Keiserskroon.

The Duc Van Thol class is somewhat earlier than the above, but with smaller flowers. These may be had in scarlet, rose, yellow, white and crimson.

The Parrot tulips have curiously shaped blossoms with fringed petals. These are odd but not adapted to massing.

The Darwin, Bybloems and Bizarres are single late kinds, growing 2 to 3 feet in height. More prized for cut flowers than for bedding. Very late and cannot be used where the beds are wanted for summer flowers.

All so far named are single. Double flowered sorts may be had in all the shades of red as well as yellow, white and variegated.

Plant tulip bulbs 3 to 5 inches deep (bottom of the bulb) and 4 to 6 inches apart.

Narcissus

Of the different classes of narcissus the daffodil or trumpet narcissus is most satisfactory for out-door planting. The Trumpet Major, single, and Von Sion, double, are two satisfactory kinds; both rich golden yellow.

The Pheasant's Eye, white with yellow center, is also hardy. The Polyanth class, of which Paper White is a representative, is not hardy out-doors in Wisconsin.

Hyacinths

Hyacinths are much admired on account of their delicate colors and delightful fragrance. The single sorts are to be preferred for bedding, as the flower spikes are the more graceful and not as likely to droop as the heavier double ones. Various shades of blue, red and yellow may be selected from the lists of dealers. The following are good: Robert Steiger, Grand Vainquer, Voltaire, Chas. Dickens and Czar Peter.

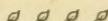
Hyacinths will not thrive in wet, heavy soil. Light, sandy loam is best. The bed should be spaded to a depth of 18 inches or more and thoroughly pulverized.

Plant 6 inches deep and 6 to 8 inches apart.

Crocus

The crocus is the earliest of the spring flowering bulbs to blossom and if planted in borders or grass plots may remain for years undisturbed.

Plant 2 to 3 inches deep. The plants require but little room and may be set 2 to 3 inches apart if desired.



The kinds here mentioned are the ones commonly planted in beds and borders. A few others, as the Snowdrop, Scilla, etc., may be added if one desires a collection.

Plant A Few

of each and brighten the home in the early spring. But little room is required and the culture is simple.

Children

love flowers. Let them make a tiny bulb garden. They may plant with their own hands, cover them for their long winter sleep and watch day by day in the spring the opening buds. This will be "Nature Study" at its best.

Teachers

often plan and plant flower gardens on the school grounds only to leave them at the beginning of their beauty as school closes. A bulb garden will be at its best at the time when we wish to draw the attention of the children to things "out-of-doors."

Pot Culture or Forcing

Many bulbs may be easily grown indoors and furnish a succession of bloom from Christmas until spring. Tulips do not force readily but all of the narcissus family, including the Chinese or sacred "lily," the miniature hyacinths and many others are easily grown.

Soil

A rich garden soil mixed with leaf mold and sand should be used. Do not use heavy clay soil nor fresh manure. Unless thoroughly decayed fine manure can be had it is better to use none at all. The compost should be well mixed and sifted before using.

Potting

Four and five-inch pots are commonly used. Fill these half full of soil, place the bulbs on this, one hyacinth or 3 to 4 tulips in a 4-inch pot, and fill to one-half inch of the top. Water thoroughly, place in a dark corner of the cellar and cover with earth or sand. This is for the purpose of developing root growth in advance of leaves. If left in the light the leaves would develop before roots were formed and exhaust the bulbs, leaving no energy for flower development. If the soil is kept moist by frequent sprinkling, in 5 or 6 weeks the pots will be well filled with roots. A few may now be brought to the light and the remainder retarded by removing to a cooler place.

Light wooden boxes 4 to 5 inches deep may be used in place of pots.

Water Culture

Hyacinths may be grown in water. Glasses for this purpose may be had of florists. Large-necked bottles will answer as well. Fill with water and place the bulb with the base resting on the water; place in a warm, dark closet, keep the bottle filled with pure water and when the roots are 3 to 4 inches in length bring to the light.

The Chinese lily or narcissus may be grown wholly in the light. The large forked or branched bulbs may be placed in water in a shallow dish in the window with a few small stones to support the roots. No further care is necessary beyond renewing the water supply as exhausted.

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